



Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT)

Information for parents and carers of autistic children and those with related social communication differences

‘PACT is currently one of the only early interventions directed at autistic children and families that has demonstrated efficacy’

The Guardian

What is PACT?

Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT) is an intervention that supports connection, celebrates difference, and enhances communication.

PACT is a partnership between professionals and you as the parent/carer. It draws on your individual positive attributes and builds on your relationship with your child. This leads to a better understanding of your child and enhances your ability to accommodate and adapt to their individual differences. In the process, your child will learn to initiate communication on many more occasions, which has a positive effect on their overall ability to interact, meet their needs, and self-advocate.

The PACT therapist uses specific video feedback techniques to help you as parents/carers recognise, respond to, and enhance your child’s communication. In this way, children are supported to develop their interaction and communication skills in their natural environment, which is one of the most effective ways of ensuring enduring development in social communication skills.

Why PACT?

PACT is currently the only robustly evidenced intervention that enhances sustained social communication skills in autistic children. PACT is an intervention where parents and therapists work together to identify how a child prefers to interact or play using video recordings. They then adapt their interactions with their child to better match that style. PACT works through familiar adults in the child’s daily life, particularly parents and carers, to support the alternative ways

autistic children learn, building stronger social communication skills and simultaneously helping parents and carers feel empowered with increased self-efficacy, wellbeing, and family resilience.

Large clinical trials have demonstrated enhanced social communication skills and a reduction in distress-related difficulties (particularly some repetitive behaviour), that were sustained into middle childhood, six years after the end of intervention. PACT is suitable for children showing early signs of autism or children with a diagnosis of autism up to 11 years of age.

How is PACT delivered?

Before starting PACT, the therapist will offer an initial meeting to discuss your child’s development and current strengths and needs. They will also ask about your experience as a family. Within each PACT session, a short video (around 10 minutes) is reviewed of you and your child interacting or playing together. The short video recording/s may be made and sent to the therapist in advance or made during the session, depending on how PACT is delivered by your therapist. You then watch the video back together with the therapist, selecting and reviewing video clips to identify and discuss the best individual communication strategies for your child. The therapist will support you to identify positive moments and together discover what is likely to work best for your child.

Where is PACT delivered?

PACT can be delivered either online, in a clinic, nursery/school or in your home.

What is the time commitment?

PACT sessions will last around 1 hour, and you will see your PACT therapist for 12 sessions every two weeks for six months. You will be asked to do 30 minutes daily practice of the PACT strategies between the sessions, during play or interaction in daily activities with your child. After the PACT intervention you may be offered further optional maintenance PACT sessions to continue generalising the communication techniques in daily routines, and can continue with support and care from health, education, and other services.

Can my child receive PACT at the same time as other interventions?

Yes, PACT can be used alongside other interventions. You may continue with health, education or social interventions and any support you receive from other local services whilst receiving PACT. PACT specifically addresses social communication needs while different interventions may be needed to support other skills.

How can PACT be accessed?

PACT is now available in a number of areas in the UK. If you have a child aged 2–11 years of age who is autistic, or is showing social communication needs, you can ask your local NHS service if they know about PACT and include it in their social communication pathway. Alternatively, you can visit www.pacttraining.co.uk/pact-locations or contact info@PACTtraining.co.uk for details of PACT-trained therapists to check if there is one near you.

‘It was a complete revelation to me, watching the video which illuminated moments of interaction with my child that I had previously missed. I now know when and how to respond in a way that harmonises with him. PACT strikes a chord with my understanding and sense of him. Talking through what I see on the video really helps me gain new insights, a true understanding so we can be on the same page and communicate better together.’

Who we are

International psychometric test publishers Hogrefe and not-for-profit group IMPACT (Interaction Methods for Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy) work together to train the professionals who deliver PACT. Hogrefe offers an introduction to PACT as an e-learning programme (Level 1) to support health professionals wishing to learn more about PACT. The programme introduces the techniques and research behind PACT and provides the background required to continue to Level 2 applied training with IMPACT. Completion of Level 2 and the accompanying post-course work qualifies the professional to deliver PACT in their own practice – and to then share it with parents and carers.



Other resources about PACT:

- For more information about the therapy, please go to: www.pacttraining.co.uk/information-for-parents or email info@pacttraining.co.uk
- More in-depth information on PACT, including interviews, videos and details of the research evidence can be found at: www.research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/pact
- For the charity Autistica's Evidence Summary of parent-led video interventions, visit: www.autistica.org.uk/downloads/files/Autistica-evidence-summary-Parent-led-video-feedback-therapy-4.pdf

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